

Advent II

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Preacher: Seminarian Ian Jarrells

[0 : 0 0] May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Please be seated. It has been said by many that everything in this world is uncertain, except for death and taxes.

While the quote is intended at humor, everyone can relate to it because of the gloomy undertones of this phrase. If anything, it communicates the idea that all good things must come to an end.

If we are to go just from our own life experiences, we can think of all the good times we've had in our lives. All of them happen for a while, and then they are over.

Nothing is permanent, despite the fact that we desire consistent happiness and pleasure in this life. Dwelling on these things for a significant amount of time can lead us to say what the preacher in Ecclesiastes says.

[1 : 0 7] Vanity of vanities. All is vanity. All is meaningless. Therefore, I must busy myself with things that do not provide lasting joy or happiness.

For if I'm going to die, and the world is coming to an end, I might as well do all the things the way I see fit. There is truth to the fact that there will be an end to all things.

Many people who have been raised in churches that focus on the end times, like myself, are told to place our hope in the destruction of the world. There was a preoccupation with death, destruction, and judgment.

We were told to keep watching or to be waiting because we are not sure when the Lord will return. We do not want to miss his arrival and forsake the salvation that is waiting for us.

While a preoccupation of this sort with the end of the world can leave us with an imbalanced approach to our current earthly dwelling, there is something that we can learn from it.

[2 : 1 0] The scriptures do teach that the Lord is going to come again, and this second coming will not be a quiet one like his first coming was. Our gospel text for today says that the very powers of heaven will be shaken when the end has come.

Jesus will not be seen as a babe in a manger, but as a king riding on the clouds with power and great glory. This coming will be quite different from the first. For those of us who are Christians, united to Christ through our baptism into him and by his body and blood, we will know exactly what is happening.

That is the meaning of the parable he speaks in our text. When we see trees that are beginning to bud, we know that summer is approaching. It is a sign of the next season of life.

Just like the budding of the trees is a sign that summer is approaching, the return of Christ will be made clear to us by the things that are happening in heaven and on earth.

We will not have to wonder what is going on or when he will come. The main thing we are told to do when he does come is to lift our heads to heaven, because our redemption has come near.

[3 : 24] Just as our redemption came near to initiate the spread of God's kingdom when Christ came the first time in the incarnation, so will our redemption come once and for all to subdue all things under his feet in his second coming.

He will rectify all injustice and he will take his bride, the church, for himself. As if to remind us that we are still on this earth for his purposes presently, he mentions that this generation, meaning the generation of unbelieving and wicked people, will remain with us until all these things have taken place.

Even so, we can be confident that this is true. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away. Heaven and earth will reference all things that are created, and all created things come and go.

But God remains forever. If he remains true forever, then that means everything he says will come to pass. Believe it or not, this teaching is supposed to be comforting to us.

But how can we see this as comforting? How can the end of the world as we know it bring consolation? There will be wickedness, cruelty, unbelief, and perverseness until the Lord comes back.

[4 : 46] That is not comforting at first glance. For many, they can create fear. We may be afraid of what can happen to us by chance, or we can be afraid of what others will do to us.

For if this generation of wicked people remains until the Lord's coming, that leaves us open to their wickedness until he returns. Contrary to the fears that we may initially face, this wickedness that we face confirms what our Lord is telling us in the gospel.

Consider the words from today's collect. Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy scriptures to be for our learning, grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

If these words about the end are written in the holy scriptures, that means that they serve a purpose for us today. They can serve many purposes for us, but I will suggest two.

They serve as exhortation to live holy while we wait, and to place our hope in Christ's will and ways instead of our own.

[6 : 07] The words about the end of this present age first serve as an exhortation. We heard earlier about the wicked generation that will not pass away until all things have taken place.

May we do as the colic says and digest these words. We must digest our Lord's prophecy of the end, because if we don't, we will digest the words of the enemy, the king of this wicked generation.

For who else is the king of this generation except the one who is the archetype of rebellion and pride? And if he is the king of this generation, then it would follow that all of his people are ambassadors of his ways.

This generation seeks good for itself only, concerned only about the things of this world. Personal fulfillment, happiness, pleasure, and worship of self are actions of this generation.

We must take heed and make sure that we are preparing for the end in a way fitting for our Lord. But how is it that we do this? Verse 36 says, Watch therefore and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man.

[7 : 25] We must continue daily in prayer, faith, and obedience to our Lord and to his church. This is the way for God's people. Secondly, these words about the end should provide us with comfort.

We should be comforted knowing that we experience trials and wickedness, for the only thing that can come after our suffering for Christ is his eternal embrace when he comes on the clouds.

We have nothing to fear if we are living in expectation of our king. How can we live in this mindset? How can we live in this comfort we are supposed to experience?

We live in this comfort by continuing towards the path of holiness. The more we strive for righteousness, confess our sins, offer kindness to others, receive the Eucharist, and live in obedience, we will begin to experience the comfort we should have about our Lord's return.

Living the way that Christ did on this earth is the way that we, as the colleague says, may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of eternal life which thou hast given us in our Savior, Jesus Christ.

[8 : 37] In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.